



US Army Corps of
Engineers®



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Caspian Tern Environmental Impact Statement

Planning Update - September 2003

The EIS process begins!

- ▶ An EIS Team was formed in January 2003, with members from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and NOAA Fisheries.
- ▶ Key issues were identified during Public Scoping.
- ▶ Draft Alternatives and Draft EIS are being developed.
- ▶ This planning update will explain these milestones and the next steps in the planning process.
- ▶ Future updates will inform you on the progress of the EIS.

Inside this Update

Why develop an EIS?.....	2
Guiding Principles.....	2
EIS Timeline.....	2
EIS Process.....	3
Public Scoping.....	3
Draft EIS & Public Comments...	3
EIS and Management Plan.....	3
Key Issues	3
Mailing List Information.....	3
Contact Information.....	3
On-Line Planning Information...	3
Caspian Tern Studies.....	4



Columbia River Estuary

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) are writing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for management of Caspian terns (*Sterna caspia*) in the Columbia River estuary. The EIS will explore options to reduce the level of tern predation on Columbia River salmon while ensuring the protection and conservation of Caspian terns in the Pacific Coast/Western region. This area includes coastal Alaska, southwestern British Columbia,

Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, California, Baja California, and Mexico.

These agencies have responsibilities under various Federal laws that affect the management of Caspian terns and salmon. The Service has responsibility for Caspian terns under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. NOAA Fisheries has responsibility for salmon recovery, and the Corps owns East Sand Island and has obligations to manage this and several other islands with potential tern nesting habitat in the Columbia River estuary.



Visit our website: <http://migratorybirds.pacific.fws.gov/CATE.htm>



Why are we developing an EIS?

In recent years, increasing numbers of Caspian terns in the Columbia River estuary have led to growing concerns over their potential impact on the recovery of threatened and endangered salmon in the Columbia River. Breeding Caspian tern numbers increased from 1,000 pairs in 1984 to nearly 10,000 pairs in 2002, accounting for 70 percent of the Pacific Coast/Western population. Research on Rice Island (see map on page 1) from 1997-2000, indicated that young salmon (smolts) comprised 70-90 percent of the terns' diet. In 1999, NOAA Fisheries required the Corps to relocate the tern colony from Rice Island to East Sand Island in an attempt to decrease the number of salmon eaten by terns. The relocation was successful and the percentage of salmon in the terns' diet

decreased to 31 percent. However, there are still concerns about the concentration of a large breeding colony on East Sand Island.

As a result of the relocation that occurred in 1999, Seattle Audubon, National Audubon, American Bird Conservancy, and Defenders of Wildlife filed a lawsuit against the Corps and the Service. The basis of the suit was that compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for the proposed action of relocating Caspian terns from Rice Island to East Sand Island, was not sufficient. Furthermore, the groups objected to the potential take of eggs as a means to prevent tern nesting on Rice Island. In 2002, all parties reached a settlement agreement. Terms of the

agreement required that the Service (lead agency), Corps, and NOAA Fisheries will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to address long-term management of Caspian terns in the Columbia River Estuary and also develop and publish three technical reports: (1) Status Assessment and Conservation Recommendations for the Caspian Tern in North America, (2) Caspian Tern Predation on Salmon and Steelhead Smolts in the Columbia River Estuary, and (3) A Review of Caspian Tern Nesting Habitat: A Feasibility Assessment of Management Opportunities in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Region. These technical reports are available on our website: <http://migratorybirds.pacific.fws.gov/CATE.htm>.

Guiding Principles

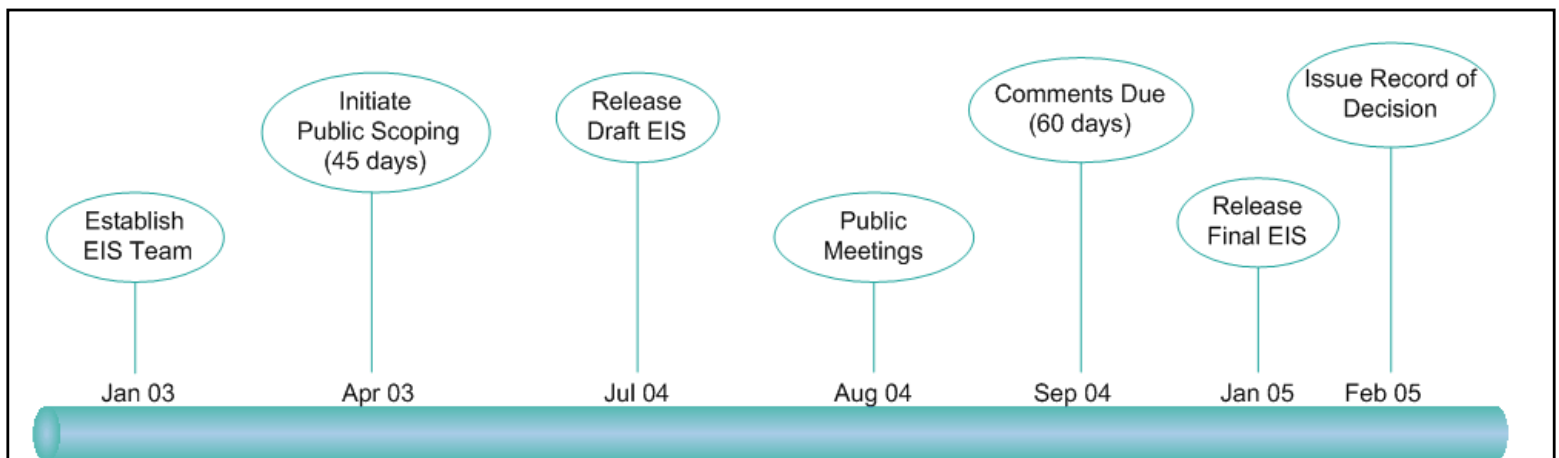
The Federal agencies agreed to the following principles to guide the development of the EIS and future Caspian tern management:

- Caspian terns and salmon are native to the Pacific Northwest
- Caspian terns and salmon are protected by various Federal and State laws and international treaties
- tools are available to manage terns as one component of a comprehensive program to recover salmon
- management actions will be implemented to ensure recovery of salmon is not impeded by tern predation
- management actions will ensure Caspian terns remain a viable and integral part of estuary, coastal, and interior ecosystems of the Pacific Coast/Western region



Illustration:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Proposed Caspian Tern EIS Timeline



The EIS Process

Step One - Public Scoping

On April 7, 2003, the Service, in cooperation with NOAA Fisheries and the Corps, published a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register to prepare an EIS for Caspian tern management in the Columbia River estuary. The notice solicited public participation in the scoping process. Scoping is the initial stage of the EIS process used to identify issues, alternatives, and impacts to be addressed in the NEPA analysis. Public comments were accepted until May 22, 2003.

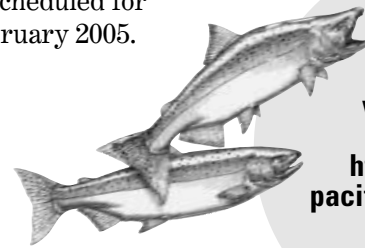
Public scoping meetings were held in Oakland and Arcata, California; Aberdeen and Olympia, Washington; and Astoria and Portland, Oregon. A total of 60 people attended these meetings. If you missed the meetings, you can view the information that was presented on our website. We received 116 comments from public meetings, letters, emails, or faxes. Key issues from these comments are summarized below.

Step Two - Draft EIS & Public Comments

The EIS Team is developing a range of Alternatives and writing the Draft EIS, scheduled for release in July 2004. A 60-day public comment period following the release will allow the public to submit comments via email or letter. There will also be public meetings during this period with EIS Team members available to answer questions. A peer review of the scientific information contained in the document will also occur during the public comment period. After comments are received, the EIS Team will develop the Final EIS and identify a proposed action. The Final EIS is scheduled for release in January or February 2005.

Final Step - EIS and Management Plan

As the timeline shows, several steps remain in the EIS process with opportunities for public input. At the end of the process, the EIS and management plan will be adopted. We anticipate management actions described in the EIS will be implemented in 2005. Although management actions will most likely be focused in the Columbia River estuary, actions may also occur at alternate sites in Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, or Nevada.



Don't forget to visit our website!

<http://migratorybirds.pacific.fws.gov/CATE.htm>

Key Issues Identified in Public Scoping

- ▶ The need for rigorous, peer-reviewed tern predation analysis to illustrate the impact terns are having on salmon recovery.
- ▶ The analysis should put tern predation in context with other factors limiting salmon recovery such as habitat loss, harvest, hydropower, and hatcheries.
- ▶ Concern over impacts to salmon and support for reducing East Sand Island tern colony. Strong concerns were expressed regarding relocation to certain areas because of possible impacts to local salmon populations.
- ▶ Concern regarding concentration of terns at one site, which results in an increased risk of catastrophic events destroying the tern colony and a large portion of the Pacific Coast tern population.
- ▶ Concern that adequate habitat is provided for terns that may potentially be displaced from East Sand Island.
- ▶ Use sound science in developing the EIS and management plan.
- ▶ Concern regarding ownership of East Sand Island and long term management and protection of wildlife resources.

Mailing List Information

Please help us reduce unwanted mailings. If you would like to be removed from our mailing list or prefer to receive updates/notices electronically, email us at: cateeis@r1.fws.gov, or write to us at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Birds and Habitat Programs, 911 NE 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97232-4181.

Contact Information

For more information, you may also contact Nanette Seto at 503-231-6164 or at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Birds and Habitat Programs, 911 NE 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97232-4181.

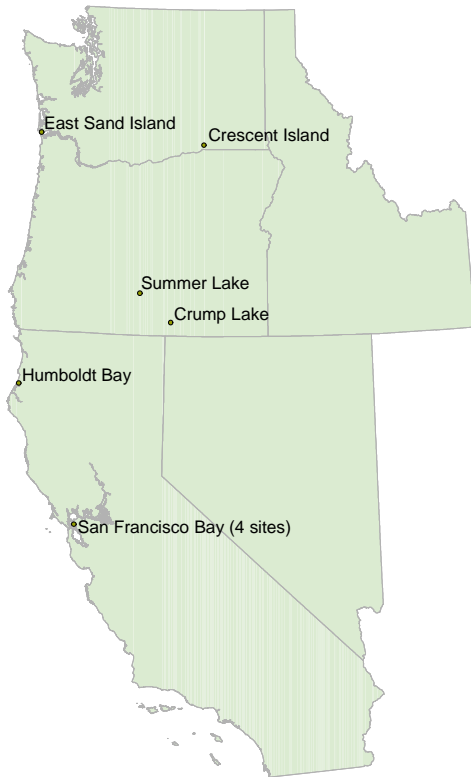
On-Line Planning Information

Background materials, electronic copies of technical reports and planning updates can be found on our website: <http://migratorybirds.pacific.fws.gov/CATE.htm>.

Caspian Tern Studies - 2003

Studies are being conducted at several sites in Washington, Oregon, and California to assist us in learning more about Caspian terns at various colony locations. The studies document what terns eat, the number of nesting pairs and chicks produced, potential limiting factors of colony size or nesting success, and effects of the colonies to other species of concern. If during the EIS process it is decided that the colony at East Sand Island should be reduced in size, these sites may potentially serve as alternate nesting sites for some of these terns. Crescent Island, as discussed in the Review of Caspian Tern Nesting Habitat document (see page 2, technical report #3), is not considered an alternate site because it is located on the Columbia River. Attracting East Sand Island terns to Crescent Island would not contribute to the goal of reducing predation of

Columbia River salmon. Other areas with historic, potential, or current tern nesting habitat, which are not included in these studies, may also be identified as alternate nesting sites in the EIS (see technical report #3, as mentioned above).

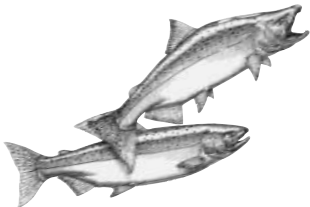


Study Locations

- Washington: Crescent Island
- Oregon: East Sand Island
Crump Lake
Summer Lake
- California: Humboldt Bay
San Francisco Bay
- Brooks Island
- Knight Island
- Baumberg Pond
- A7 pond

** Information on research being conducted on East Sand and Crescent islands can be found on the following website: www.columbiabirdresearch.org*

Caspian Tern Management EIS
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Migratory Birds and Habitat Programs
911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, OR 97232-4181



*Illustration:
Gary Whitley*

Visit our website: <http://migratorybirds.pacific.fws.gov/CATE.htm>